

TRAINING DAY FIFTY YEARS AGO.

**Hans Gives a Vivid Description of One of
Them—Hamilton on George III.'s
Birthday.**

For the Hamilton TIMES.

As we sit on a stone, belonging to a broken arch, at the ruins on McInnes' corner, we wept not as we thought of the day when the Canadian militiaman in the height of his glory made this spot the great attraction on the return of each training day. As we gazed on the grand display in the streets—the bunting coquettishly flirting with the flagstuffs, our thoughts drifted backwards to the 4th of June 'training days,' when we, poor, green fellows, came here to see the sights. We had struggled for weeks to get the work ahead, so as to have leisure to come hither, and we had laid aside our coppers for months and worked hard at our tasks early and late, to obtain the reward of an American quarter dollar for our industry. As the great day approached, we became more and more

excited, until sleep was nearly banished from our eyelids. Simple souls that we were, we felt great anxiety to have our clothes in proper trim. Our new broad brimmed straw hat with the gay red ribbon band trailing just beyond its periphery, was frequently examined and returned to the peg where it had proudly roosted for a week. Our low cowhide shoes had been blackened with milk and the soot from the chimney-back and set a side while we went barefoot. Our very short jacket, with side pockets under the sleeves, was frequently examined and the brass buttons kept bright. Our short, baggy pants were carefully brushed, and our new striped shirt with broad collar—for which we had churned so many weary hours that mother might spare money enough to buy the material with—was carefully folded and laid aside. Folly's germ lingered with us and we were not destitute of jewellery, for the big Indian brooch to fasten our shirt collar with was kept shining bright. The great day at length arrives, and the lazy sun creeps slowly up from behind the dark green tree tops, and our preparations are hurried forward. We push along through

the dusty, stumpy road and reach the village of Hamilton. Some come on foot, some on horseback and others in large waggons with house chairs instead of seats—one filled with men and women, boys and girls. In the street, dashing about from side to side, ride the country hopefuls, shouting and exchanging coarse jokes.

Matthew Bailey (who afterwards protected Mr. W. Lyon McKenzie when attacked by Kerr, Condon and Pettit) kept a small bakery a little east from the present Morgan mills and dispensed the candy, ginger beer and cakes. With him we spent our coppers, and obtaining a large card of gingerbread, we broke it into convenient sized parallelograms and setting a piece upright into each jacket pocket, and removing our handkerchief to our pants' pocket, we left a corner dangling out to let the crowd see that we had one. We grasped the balance of our gingerbread in our two hands and holding it in front of us, gnawed perseveringly at it while our eyes rolled wonderingly at the grand display that opened to our ravished vision as we surveyed the surging crowds and walked slowly

around the low wet corner to Carey's great brick hotel, now known as the McInnes corner. This is one of the historical points in and about Hamilton. It was here that Mr. John G. Parker afterwards kept an extensive dry goods store, occupying a part of the first and the whole of the upper flat as a dwelling. At the breaking out of the rebellion of 1837 Mr. Parker was arrested on a charge of high treason and cast into prison, and his dwelling and store were locked up and a guard set over them, Mrs. Parker and the children taking refuge at Mr. Bostwick's (her father) house in Toronto. * Mr. Parker admitted that he had 'written letters that would bear a treasonable construction.' This was all that could be brought against him, nevertheless, he was kept in prison and his business left to go to ruin, until orders came from the Home Government directing that he and several others should be sent to England. They were accordingly put on board a steamer and sent down the St. Lawrence. Mr. Parker being accustomed to a comfortable home complains bitterly in his diary of the treatment he received on board, being obliged to wrap himself in his cloak

and lie down at night on the forecastle, in the filth about the feet of the horses. Not long after his arrival in England he was released by the authorities and simply advised not to return to Canada, which advice, as in duty bound, he accepted, and set up business in Rochester, N. Y.

As we have already signified, Carey's corner was the place of muster, on the 4th of June training days. William Green, one of the heroes of Stoney Creek, in scarlet jacket, cap and white pants, would take a position in the open cupola on the centre of the cottage roof, and with his snare drum, call the valiant militia together. The different companies being drawn up in double files, impatient wait, in the broiling sunshine, the order to move. Quiet, kindly old officers, in blue frock, sash, and white linen pants, who have seen service in the war of 1812, stride majestically in front of their companies, proud of their charge, whom they had plied with whiskey, distributed by the pailful, from Carey's hotel. Looking down the line, a grotesque and motley spectacle presented itself—here a tall man, with a straw hat on his head, and his coat thrown over his left arm ; next a short, fat

man, with his hat in his hand, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, and returning his bandanna to the inside of his plug; another wears a blue pigeon-tail coat, and instead of a musket, sports a short hickory cane, and still another has possession of his wife's umbrella, she, good soul, having taken shelter in their waggon which stands beneath a shade tree, while the horses partake of their noon-day meal 'from the tail-end' of the box. The men's home uniforms may be divided into an equal number of blue frock coats and blue pigeon-tails, bell-crowned plugs and broad-brimmed straw hats, the prevailing color of the pants being white. The fantastic appearance of the companies comes through no fault of the privates, neither the absence of arms nor discipline. Nearly all are sound, loyal men, willing to defend their country to the best of their ability, not counting pluck, which has been nurtured by tales of the revolution and the late war. The easy-going colonel, having returned from a short inspection, gives the order, 'Right, half-face.' The veterans immediately obey the order, while the raw ones look along the line for some old flanker to

see what position he is in. In a few minutes all are ready to move, when suddenly Wm. Green and Billy Ayres, the two drummers, with two fifers, take their position at the head of the column and the order, 'Forward, march!' is pompously given. The fifes and drums strike up a lively air, the companies sway and stagger and tread on each other's heels, or leave great gaps, which the sergeants vainly endeavor to close up.

They move on to the common in the rear of the jail, when an attempt is made to bring them to a halt. But such confusion! The rear companies are flanking the front companies and making their way to the shade of the rail fence and the trees, where half of them throw themselves on the grass. The colonel trots his horse to and fro, yells and gesticulates fiercely, but all to no purpose. At length, apparently heart broken, he subsides into quiet resignation. Now follows an exhibition of one of the strong points in the men's character. They love and respect their colonel, they are ashamed of their conduct and rise to their feet and form as well as they know how. After much perplexity the companies are formed in

quarter column, inspected, reported, extended into line and addressed by the

colonel, who thanks them for their attendance, their good intentions, their loyalty, and—and (pausing, faintly says) 'your soldierly (?) bearing'; and tells them they will be directly relieved from duty on returning to the hotel—all of which they distinctly understand. Three cheers are given for the king, in which the boys on the fences and in the trees join—even the loyalist daughters flirt their handkerchiefs, and the good old women wipe a tear from their eyes. Three cheers for the governor, three for the colonel, three for everybody. No sooner has the cheering ceased than a general race takes place to headquarters. The officers are left behind, and console themselves by discussing the merits of their men and the cause of the failure of the attempted movements. On the arrival of the men at the big hotel, the companies are very creditably formed to receive the pails of whiskey, and cheer lustily as the officers come up. The roll being called, the attendance of members of companies has increased; there is also an addition of a great number of volunteers. As the pails pass along the line, some who do not wish to drink,

take the rear rank, allowing those who are 'terribly thirsty' to come to the front. A similar change takes place as the pails pass along the line by which the thirsty are agreeably accommodated. The men being dismissed, the captains pay for the wholesale treat, and the colonel pays the captains' personal bills. The quiet hasten homeward; foot races, wrestling, some fisticuffing and 'scrub races' follow. The sun sinks languidly behind the Flamboro' hills, his fire goes out, and sultry sullen darkness closes the scene.

HANS.

May 24th, 1880.